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ABSTRACT

This action research project evaluated the impact of a 16-week intervention to improve primary school children's conflict resolution skills and to enhance their self-esteem. The targeted population consisted of one kindergarten class, one first-grade class, and one third-grade class at three different elementary schools in the same suburban Chicago school district. Teacher observation checklists, teacher and student surveys, individual and teacher interviews, and anecdotal records were used to document the problem. Three types of intervention were used: (1) providing lessons on self-esteem; (2) adapting a life skills unit; and (3) teaching conflict resolution strategies. The five themes for activities implemented twice weekly in 30-minute lessons and adapted to grade level were self-awareness, cooperation, individual responsibility, identification and expression of feelings, and conflict resolution. The impact of the intervention was assessed through observations of children's behavior by participating teachers, other faculty, and the building principals. Findings indicated that there was a decrease in the negative classroom behaviors of physical and verbal aggression and negative social interactions. Student surveys revealed more positive self-esteem and more insight into the feelings of others. Students were able to use the peace table and called on the teacher for mediation in solving disputes. Appendices include interview and survey forms, behavior checklists, conflict resolution skills, and sample activities. Contains 59 references. (Author/KB)

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Positive Social Interaction Strategies

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
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Abstract

This report describes a program to improve socialization skills and conflict resolution skills, while developing better self esteem. The targeted population consists of one kindergarten class, one first grade class, and one third grade class all at three different elementary schools in the same district. This community is a western suburb of Chicago. The problem of low self esteem and poor social skills will be documented through teacher observation checklists, teacher and student surveys, individual and teacher interviews, and also anecdotal records.

Analysis of probable causes revealed that greater exposure to more violence and rudeness in society, changes in family structures, poor role models, and lack of experience in developing social skills contributed to this problem. Review of literature supports that these factors have an effect on children. Teachers have observed children being rude, thoughtless, and sometimes rejecting other children.

A review of solution strategies lead the teachers to these three interventions: provide lessons on self esteem, adapt a life skills unit, and use conflict resolution strategies. Success of the intervention was indicated by the children's behavior at the end of the project, through observations of the participating teachers and of other faculty members, including the principals.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted kindergarten, first grade, and third grade classes exhibit behavior which indicates a lack of social skills. The inability to cooperate with other students, take responsibility for their actions or appropriately handle conflict situations causes disturbances within the school setting and detracts from the learning atmosphere. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes anecdotal records, checklists, and student interviews, and surveys.

This project will target one kindergarten class, one first grade class, and one third grade class, all at three different elementary schools in the same district. In addition, input from a kindergarten through fourth grade art teacher working at Site A and Site C will be included. This district is in a community of a western suburb of Chicago.

Site A

According to the School Report Card, at site A, the student population during the 1995-1996 school was comprised of 194 students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. The student body during this same time period was approximately 66% White/Non-Hispanic; 31.4% Hispanic; 1.5% Asian/Pacific Islander; and 1.0% Black. Approximately 11.9% of the students qualified for the free

lunch program. The student mobility rate was 17.9%, and there weren't any problems with truancy.

The Limited English Proficient (LEP) or Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) as it is called at this site, serviced approximately 10.8%. The total school attendance averaged 94.65 with a 0% truancy rate for this same school year. The learning behavior disorder resource program serviced eight students in grades one through four. In addition, there were two self-contained behavior disorder classes which are part of the Community Area Special Education Cooperative.

Site B

At site B, the student population during the 1995-1996 school year was comprised of 451 students in grades kindergarten through fifth. The student body during this time period was approximately 72.1% White/Non- Hispanic; 25.9% Hispanic; 1.3%Black; 0.7% Asian/Pacific Islander. About 20% of the students qualified for free lunch program. The student mobility rate was 31.1%. Eighty-three percent of our parents were members of the Parent Teacher Association.

The Limited English Proficiency Program serviced 6.7% of the student population. The total school attendance averaged 95.8% with 0% truancy. Students were also serviced by a speech/language therapist, 2 social workers, a library/computer teacher. They also attended physical education classes, art class, and music class. This site also included a learning disability classroom, with a special education resource teacher, serving students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Site C

The student's population at site C during the 1995-1996 school year was comprised of 236 students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. In addition to serving K - 4 students, the site houses a district level primary self-contained learning disabilities program for students in grades one through three, and an early childhood special education program, which is a part of the Community Area Special Education Cooperative. The ECP program serves students ages three through six from surrounding districts in the cooperative through a cross categorical delivery system utilizing an integrated therapy model of instruction. The student body during this same time period was approximately 75.4% White/Non-Hispanic; 21.2% Hispanic; 3.0% Asian /Pacific Islander; and 0.4% Black. Approximately 4.2% students qualified for the free lunch program. The students mobility rate was 16.8%.

The Limited English Proficiency Program serviced approximately 4.7% in grades kindergarten through fourth grade during the 1995-1996 school year. The school attendance averaged 95.8 % with a 0% truancy rate. There is also a resource teacher who served the IEP students and also pulled children out for the learning disabilities resource program.

Most parents join the PTA, but are minimally active. Parent volunteers do come into the school and help in the office and the classrooms.

For the district, the average teaching experience is 12.4 years. The number of teachers with a Bachelor's degree is 46.7%. The number of teachers with a Master's degree and above is 53.3%. For the district, the pupil to teacher ratio 17.3 to 1.

Community Characteristics

This elementary school district was founded in 1895. It serves elementary pupils from the town, and also parts of an unincorporated area. A total of 1187 students were enrolled in two kindergarten through fourth grade buildings, one kindergarten through fifth grade building, and one junior high (6-8 building) during the 1994 - 1995 school year.

The district employs ninety certified teachers, five administrators, and thirty-nine educational support personnel. The average teacher salary in this district is $43,131 and the average administrative salary in $75,029.

Enrollments in this district from 1985 to the present show an increase in student population by 395 pupils. The following school year enrollments reflect this steady increase within the district (with an exception of the 1986 - 1987 school year.)

1985 - 1986	(856)	1989 - 1990	(1,011)	1993 - 1994	(1,177)
1986 - 1987	(825)	1990 - 1991	(1,049)	1994 - 1995	(1,187)
1987 - 1988	(884)	1991 - 1992	(1,074)	1995 - 1996	(1,251)
1988 - 1989	(974)	1992 - 1993	(1,105)	1996 - 1997	(1,300)

This village was incorporated in 1892. It is a western suburb of Chicago. In 1970, the population was 20,348. In 1980, the population decreased to 17,507. In 1990.the population increased to 18,485. With a large number of electronics and manufacturing firms, the village is the fourth most industrialized suburb in Illinois. Companies have found it to be an attractive location because of its proximity to O'Hare International Airport

and the locally available labor market with the required skill levels. Matsushita Electric Corporation of America, Nestle Chocolate and Confection Company, Binks Manufacturing Company, Thompson Steel Company, CP Rail Systems, Sloan Valve Company, BWD Automotive Corporation Gender Corporation, and Castle and Company are some of the largest employers in this village. In 1990, the median family income increased from $26,151 in 1980, to $40,193. Median home values soared from $64,000 to $99,200 in 1990.

This district faces many of the same problems and challenges seen in other schools across the state and country. The district's strong dependence on local property taxes, paid for largely by the area's industrial and commercial tax base,is in jeopardy. Tax caps already limit the district's access to the existing property tax base. State-wide school finance reforms may result in reduced funding for the schools. Increasing enrollment trends are putting pressure on the district facilities and budgets. It is anticipated that enrollments will continue to increase. Space is already an issue in all of the district schools. It is not likely that revenue growth will keep pace with enrollment increases.

The demographics of the community are changing. Many students now come from households in which both parents work outside of the home. Many students live with a single parent. Until recently most of the residents have been second and third generation descendants of the families who immigrated from southern and eastern Europe. Many new families now come from Hispanic backgrounds. A steady influx of non-English speaking families present new challenges to the schools.

Regional and National Context of the Problem

The problem with inappropriate social interactions among students in this district is representative of problems in many school districts throughout the country. Many factors that contribute to the problem have been documented.

Studies confirm that children's exposure to violence seen in television programs has a negative effect on social behavior in classrooms.(Levin and Carlsson-Paige, 1995). Exposure to media violence desensitizes children to real-life aggression (Molitor and Hirsch, 1994).

"Television is a pervasive part of American culture and has the potential to make significant contributions to children's development"(Bauer, 1994). Another area found to be responsible for contributing to children resolving conflicts in an aggressive way is their involvement in playing video games (Ceserone, and Bernard, 1994). Some feel performing violent acts in video may be more conducive to children's aggression than passively watching violent acts on television.

"Today, children are more isolated from parents, extended family members, and other adults than ever before," Johnson and Johnson (1995). More children are becoming latch-key kids as the make up of the family unit changes. In addition, children living in dysfunctional families or exposed to violent media, often lack positive role models to help them develop positive self-esteem and good social skills.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

To document our data, we tape recorded student interviews (Appendix A), administered teacher surveys (Appendix B), and student surveys (Appendix C), and maintained behavioral observation checklists for either whole group or small cooperative groups. In addition, stories were read to students in which a problem was described, but the solution was not stated. Following discussions, students were asked to resolve or find a solution to the problems within the stories. This procedure was used in order to gain an understanding of their growth in conflict resolution skills. The teachers also used anecdotal records for targeted children who exhibited more difficulties in these areas.

Table 1 is a tally chart of the student survey (Appendix C) which states students' attitudes toward school and how they react in various situations.

This student survey was administered at the beginning of the project in September, 1996. It represents baseline information pertaining to students' attitudes and social skills before teacher interventions. The kindergarten and first grade students were asked the questions individually in a one to one conference. The third grade students filled out the surveys at their desks. The responses were then tallied.

Table 1

Student Survey (Appendix C) Tally Chart	Yes Sites A	B	C	No Sites A	B	C
1. Do you like school?	30	19	21	0	3	3
2. Do you have friends?	30	20	23	0	2	1
3. Do you like to be alone?	8	5	7	22	17	17
4. Do you like to work in groups?	26	18	21	4	4	3
5. Do you fight at school?	0	0	1	30	22	23
6. Do you hit your classmates?	0	0	1	30	22	23
7. Is the teacher nice to you?	28	22	24	2	0	0
8. Do you share at school?	29	20	24	1	2	0
9. Are you mean to children?	0	2	0	30	20	24
10. Do you help others?	30	20	24	0	2	0

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Teachers within the schools were also given a survey, Table 2, to find out how the children in their classrooms work together. The questions also pertained to whether the children like to work by themselves or in groups. Conflict resolution questions were included to find out how the children dealt with problems as they arise. Social skills and classroom atmosphere were also surveyed.

Table 2

Teacher Survey (Appendix B)

1. Do your students like working in groups?

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	0	9	2	0	0
Site B	5	8	5	0	0
Site C	1	3	3	2	0

2. Do your student like working alone?

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	0	1	8	2	0
Site B	0	1	16	1	0
Site C	0	2	4	3	0

3. Do your students fight or use aggression in handling problems?

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	0	1	3	6	1
Site B	0	3	6	8	0
Site C	0	4	3	1	0

4. Do your students listen to one another?

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	0	4	6	1	0
Site B	0	8	9	1	0
Site C	0	2	5	2	0

5. Do you have parents that are supportive to your class policies?

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	1	6	3	0	0
Site B	0	15	3	0	0
Site C	3	5	1	0	0

6. On a scale of 1 - 5 rate your classroom atmosphere. (1 = high, 5 = low)

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	1	6	3	0	1
Site B	5	6	3	4	0
Site C	0	3	6	0	0

7. Do the majority of your students participate in class discussions?

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	0	6	4	1	0
Site B	1	9	6	1	1
Site C	2	3	4	0	0

8. Are your students supportive of each other?

	always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
Site A	1	6	4	0	0
Site B	0	10	7	1	0
Site C	0	1	5	3	0

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These two teacher observation checklists were devised to focus on social skills. The first behavior checklist was used for a whole group setting (Appendix D). The targeted behaviors were physical aggression, verbal aggression, and negative social interactions. The second behavior checklist was utilized for the observation of cooperative groups (Appendix E). In this survey, we also focused on the students who do not participate within their groups, are unprepared with material for their group work, physically leave the group, and also may be off task.

For the Classroom Behavior Checklist, only sites A and C targeted the children in a whole group setting. This was due to the fact that the children are younger and the teacher was focused on whole group instruction. Site B focused on cooperative group settings comprised of four students each because this structure was appropriate for this age level.

Table 3: Classroom Behavior Checklist (Appendix D)

*Physical Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
1	NA	10	1	NA	8	1	NA	7	0	NA	4

*Verbal Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
0	NA	12	3	NA	7	0	NA	9	0	NA	2

*Negative Social Interactions:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
39	NA	28	6	NA	24	1	NA	17	1	NA	9

Cooperative Group Behavior Checklist (Appendix E)

*Physical Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	45	NA	NA	15	6	NA	9	1	NA	6	1

*Verbal Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	15	NA	NA	26	8	NA	12	5	NA	6	3

*Does Not Contribute:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	1	NA	NA	7	9	NA	5	8	NA	4	5

*Unprepared:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	2	NA	NA	7	4	NA	6	2	NA	4	0

*Physically Leaves Group:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	2	NA	NA	7	8	NA	5	3	NA	3	2

*Off Task:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	2	NA	NA	4	10	NA	4	10	NA	3	4

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As the project progressed, the students were presented with conflict situations. They were instructed to predict possible solutions. To demonstrate these solutions, the children could draw pictures, write endings to the stories or write in their journals.

In art class, projects reflected the learning of these skills. These projects showed a transfer of learning from the regular classroom into another setting. Comparative drawings were made before the interventions and then again at the culmination of the project. Cooperative group activities were utilized. Art lessons corresponded to all of the targeted weekly social and life skills taught in the regular classroom.

Probable Causes

There are many probable causes for the lack of social skills that the children exhibit. The first probable cause of this problem may be the increase in a child's exposure to more violence and rudeness in society. According to Craig's study (as cited in Burke, 1995), "living with violence inhibits the cognitive processes by which a child develops an awareness of the self." Lack of self-awareness leaves a child to feel powerless, and to see adults as threatening rather than supportive, which can possibly lead to violence. Children who must endure verbal threats within the family are more prone to exhibit violent behavior (Patterson, 1992). Segments of society that support aggression as a positive attribute contribute to participation in violent behavior, according to Bandura (as cited in Burke, 1995). Places and situations in which this may happen are on television, in family situations, and also in the community in which the child lives (Argyris, 1994).

Another source of the problem may be from definite changes in the family structures. Many children spend hours alone with no adult supervision. Long and Long (1983) state "that parents commonly believe that when a child reaches age eight, or about third grade, he or she is mature enough to handle self- care." There is an increasing amount of latch key kids. The divorce rate is escalating. Many studies support a correlation between divorce experiences and a wide rage of adjustment difficulties. Hodges and Bloom (1984) found higher rates of disruptive behavior for younger children. Many children experience a lack of appropriate discipline in the family structure. In addition to this, more and more children are involved in daycare for longer periods of time.

A third cause of this problem is from the lack of good role models that the children see and with whom they are involved. Adults cannot spend as much time with children,teaching conflict resolution or behavior expectations (Walker, 1993). Since the child's exposure to television is increasing, they are seeing more and more violently aggressive media figures. Popular television heroes, such as the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, often solve their problems with aggressive, violent actions. Children often model this physical response to situations and initiate violence or react violently to others (Levin, Carlsson-Paige, 1995). Also, many of the adults the children spend time with in their homes and in the community may be dysfunctional. Abuse, poverty, and other forces interfere with normal parenting (Walker, 1993). Unable to get attention in positive ways, some children seek status through antisocial behavior or aggression like their role models, according to Gold & Osgood's study (as cited in Burke, 1995).

A fourth cause to the problem is the lack of experience in developing social skills. Because of the young age of these children being studied, they may not have had an adequate amount of time to learn these social skills. Students who exhibit violent behavior often do not employ appropriate methods of communicating feelings of anger and use a verbal style that lacks verbal mediation skills (Camp, 1977). According to Moreau (1994) "third grade students generally lack the social skills needed to resolve conflicts."

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Socialization plays an important role in a child's educational development. Socialization is defined as the process by which an individual learns to interact with others (Feldhusen and McDaniel, 1974). Social skill development is the core of this action research plan. Included in this category are such behaviors as cooperation, responsibility, and an awareness of one's self as a member of a group. It is also important for an effective program that disruptive behaviors be reduced and rechanneled into constructive social and academic behaviors. The techniques used are designed to compliment the academic program and to give the teacher additional tools for an effective program.

Bierman and Schwartz (1986) offer an excellent explanation for social skills training as "a generic label for short-term structured interventions that use instructions and demonstrations, behavioral rehearsal, and performance feedback to teach children specific positive social interaction strategies." They found social skills training to be very effective for aggressive, unpopular or rejected children.

Teachers can use their classroom to help children gain self-esteem. According to Leyser (1976) teachers can use interventions such as role-playing techniques and activities to improve social skills in children. Sometimes children with low self - esteem or

poor social skills become ostracized by others. Self-image plays an important role in the excluded child. Shaping, modeling, and coaching (Asher, 1974) have been found to bring the ostracized children back into being accepted and included.

In a classroom the children generally fall into three categories: leaders, children that are liked or accepted, and children that are not liked or are rejected. Much of learning depends on the atmosphere in which learning takes place, and the classroom and the individual student's comfort level within the school setting.

Some of the stereotypes that affect a child's friendships, acceptance, or rejection include his/her name, physical appearance, race, and sex (Asher, 1974). School environments also affect acceptance and rejection. This includes school activities, kinds of classrooms, and opportunities to succeed. Also children are included or excluded according to communication skills, academic performance, and behavior or skills in making and keeping friends. Asher also points out that children can be taught to succeed in being accepted.

Another factor that comes into play is having a friend. The quality of friends appears to predict loneliness and peer acceptance. Parker and Asher (1989) state that problematic group acceptance is indicative of problems in friendship adjustments. Quality of children's friendships drop off as acceptance decreases. Aggressive behaviors (McIntosh and Vaughn, 1993) were related to peer ratings of children who would be least likely to be chosen as friends. Even taking gender and ethnic diversity into consideration, aggression predicts peer-rejection.

Children can be taught three verbal social skills: asking

questions of peers, leading peers by offering suggestions and asking directions, and offering supportive statements to peers (Ladd, 1979). They can practice these techniques during role-playing with support and rewards from the teacher. The children can also be taught to self-evaluate their skill in performances. This learning procedure has shown to increase the peer-acceptance of the shunned child.

There should be school intervention programs to stop the school "bullies" and to reduce aggression (Slee and Rigby, 1994). Generally this type of child is the one to be ostracized. Students in a Chicago public school were taught interventions to resolve conflict by using resolution strategies (Argyris, 1994). The solution strategies included:

1. lessons on self-esteem
2. utilizing conflict resolution techniques through literature and role playing
3. adapting a life skills unit

Marshal and Christie (1982) concluded that self-management procedures and cueing can enhance self-esteem. Having a higher self-esteem helps the child to be more accepted and included with his peers. Phillips (1984) concurs by saying that teachers verbalizing praise enhances self-esteem. Smith (1982) discussed the need to identify behavioral objectives, develop learning experiences, and evaluate students' progress in achieving selected affective goals.

However, many researchers recently have warned against the dangers of misuse or overuse of praise. Because children have been consistently and constantly praised for their work, they tend to feel over-confident and do not feel a need to revise work or

perform at a higher level. According to McGerald and Nidds (1996) teachers need to help children to earn self-esteem and eschew self-delusion.

In consideration of the findings on probable causes we are targeting the areas of violence, dysfunctional families, lack of good role models, and the young age of our children. To counteract the negative influences of violence within society teachers can teach the students skills for getting along with others in a peaceable manner. For example teachers can help students identify and develop problem solving and reasoning skills, social capacities and a productive sense of purpose, independence, and power(Pereira, 1995).

According to Bretherton (1995) one approach to reducing violence is to develop nonviolent conflict resolution programs to provide children with the skills to solve problems collaboratively. These programs also may encourage people to refocus the way they experience conflict in their lives. They teach that conflict is a necessary component for growth and can lead to shared understandings, when dealt with in a positive way.

Johnson and Johnson (1995) state that an alternative approach to violence is training students in conflict resolution and peer mediation. It is the school's responsibility to provide the students with an orderly environment that is a cooperative setting.

To counteract the problem of latch key children, many schools are implementing various programs in which children may come to school early to work on school work, or after school programs to aid in the completion of homework. This may provide the only

adult contact that some children have on a one to one basis for aiding in school work.

Rainbows is another program offered to give support to children who have suffered a loss, either through divorce or a death in their family. Teachers are being trained to work with small groups of these needy children in order to give them the opportunity to express their feelings in a safe environment. Building trust with adults could be an additional benefit of this type of program. Within our schools, social workers and psychologists are utilized to aid children with counseling needs.

Children also need positive role models. Schools provide the opportunity for children to see adults in a variety of responsible roles. For instance, the principal may interact with the children in social ways. For example,children may have lunch with the principal or read to the principal, or they may work on accelerated reader programs with the children. The teachers are in a position to demonstrate to children how adults interact appropriately with one another (Canter and Petersen, 1995).

The children in our study are at the age where they may not have been able to develop adequate social skills (Moreau, 1994). Some of their behaviors are age appropriate. For instance, a five year old pushes to be first in line. This is how he handles his problem at this age level. Therefore, it is the teacher's job to aid in the teaching of these skills, along with the parents. During the process of their education, teachers must give them lessons in conflict resolution, manners, and appropriate social skills (Schmidt and Friedman, 1993). Lessons, along with discussion and self reflections, should be utilized in the classroom. The educators must provide ample opportunity to role -

play, model, and discuss various situations that may arise in a young person's life.

ACTION PLAN

This action plan will cover a 16 week period. The topics are broken down into monthly activities. By the end of the four month period, we will add culminating activities for further evaluation of transfer of learning. Lessons will be implemented twice a week for one half hour lessons. These lessons will be taught by topic, and adapted to each grade level.

September-

Self-Awareness and Cooperation

Objective-

Students will be able to get to know themselves and classmates in order to become aware of feelings and actions.

Week one

Getting to Know Self

activities-

1. Students will fill out questionnaires about self and include likes/dislikes, family members, and feelings.
2. Take information from questionnaire, and create a "Me" mobile or autobiography. "Me" bags could also be created, depending on grade level. These activities will help us get ready for Open House.

literature sources-

1. A Color of His Own, Leo Lionni
2. Fish is Fish, Leo Lionni

journal entries-

1. I am happy when...
2. When I grow up...

art activity-

1. Create "Me" t- shirts, including facts and dreams about self.

Week two-

Ability to Recognize Own Actions

activities-

1. Implement student surveys (Appendix C). Students begin to reflect on their feelings, and how they act in various situations.

2. Interview students and tape record. Set up conflicts and tape student responses to how they would react in each situation.

literature sources-

1. The Fighting Frog, Leo Lionni

2. Two Giants, Michael Foreman

3. Swimmy, Leo Lionni

journal entries-

1. When someone pushes me around I...(Use for Dec.comparison.)

2. I really get angry when...

art activity-

1. Interpret the artist's picture "Giants in the Clouds." Draw interpretation.

Week three

Begin Cooperative Lessons

activities-

1. Establish base groups. Introduce the word cooperation. In base group, web "cooperation." Draw pictures of examples or write examples of this. Present webs to class.

2. In base groups, brainstorm rules for what they think good group rules are. Compare student rules with social skills and "I Care" rules. Decide on classroom rules for groups.

literature sources-

1. The Lion and The Mouse, Aesops Fables

2. Mr. Tall and Mr. Small, Barbara Browner

journal entries-

1. I thought our group..

2. In my group, I...

art activities-

1. Create a classroom mural, in which all children have a job.

Week four-

Self Reflections

activities-

1. IALAC (Appendix F) lesson as a classroom activity. In base groups, draw one picture to show how character from IALAC could solve a problem.

2. Introduce Mrs. Potter's Questions (Appendix G).

literature source-

1. The Little Rabbit Who Wanted Red Wings, Sherwin Bailey

2. Just One Me-Follett, Aileen Brothers and Cora Holsclaw

journal entries-

1. Mrs. Potter's Questions of base groups

art activity-

1. body tracing

October-

Responsibility

Objective-

Students will be able to recognize that they are accountable for actions and words.

Week one-

Defining Responsibility

activities-

1. In base groups, web the word Responsibility. Jigsaw work with another base group.
2. Sing "When You are Responsible and You Know It, Take a Bow."

literature sources-

1. Frog and Toad Are Friends. Arnold Lobel
2. Mrs. Piggle Wiggle. Betty MacDonald

journal entries-

1. At home I am responsible for...
2. At school I am responsible for...

art activity-

1. Lesson on responsibility of art materials.

Week two-

Group Work

activities-

1. Introduce base group jobs. Fish bowl situations for each job role.
2. Choral read the poem "Kids are Different."

literature sources-

1. A Rainbow of Friends. P.K. Halliman
2. Frog and Toad are Friends. Arnold Lobel
3. A Chair For My Mother. Vera B. Williams

journal entries-

1. Responses to the poem.

2. Self assessment for group work.

art activity-

1. Color kids around the world using various skin tones.

Week three-

Positive Solutions

activities-

1. Read The Little Red Hen , but only the problem. In base groups, predict ending.

2. Role play situation in which character teases classmate and others. Main character denies wrongful actions. Classroom discussion on teasing and "only kidding."

literature sources-

1. It's Mine, Leo Lionni

2. Alexander, and the Horrible, Terrible No Good, Very Bad Day. Judith Viorst

journal entries-

1. A time I teased someone

2. One time I got in trouble for teasing was

art activity-

1. Classroom teacher and art teacher bake bread in an uncooperative way. Children reflect on how it made them feel.

Week four-

Jobs and Responsibility

activities-

1. As a whole class, brainstorm responsibilities of family members and their roles.

2.In base groups, brainstorm responsibilities of the school's faculty members.

literature sources-

1. Free to be a Family, Marlo Thomas

2. Big Shoe, Little Shoe, Denys Cazet

journal entries-

1. On the computer, using "Kid's Work" program, list jobs of specific family members.

art activity-

1. Draw members in a base group and their job.

November-

Feelings

Objective-

Students will be able to identify their feelings and be able to express them appropriately.

Week one-

Feelings Vocabulary

activities-

1. Introduce feeling words (Appendix H). Use previous literature to discuss feelings. Use body language to show feelings.
2. Hold up pictures and have children describe feelings on faces. Give blank faces and draw pictures of these feelings.

literature sources-

1. Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak
2. Joshua's Day, Sandra Surowiecki

journal entry-

1. Using the "My Feelings" chart choose two feelings and write how you feel now.

art activity-

1. Create paper plate stick puppets. Draw happy/sad faces.

Week two-

Feelings Descriptions

activities-

1. Pull feeling name labels from hat. Act out what that feeling looks like.
2. In base groups, cut people out of magazines. Decide on feeling for each character. Create dialogue for characters.

literature sources-

1. Feelings, Aliki

2. Feeling Sad, Joy Berry

journal entries-

1. I feel sad when...

2. School makes me feel...

art activity

1. Draw story picture showing character using three emotions.

Week three-

Field Trip

activities-

1. Field trip to J.F.K. Center in Barrington, or Robert Crown Center. Trip will focus on lessons and activities on various feelings that we feel.

2. Follow up activities for field trip.

literature sources-

1. Sometimes I Worry, Alan Gross

2. "What If", Shel Silverstein

journal entries-

1. When I was at the J.F.K. Center, I learned...

2. The lessons at the J.F.K. Center made me think of...

art activity-

1. Colors represent feelings.

Week Four-

Thanksgiving Feelings

activities-

1. Children identify feelings that Pilgrims and Native Americans must have felt during this time.

2. Identify cooperative skills that Pilgrims must have had and

also the ones that the Native Americans had. Identify cooperative skills that the two groups had together.

literature sources-

1. Grandfather's Journey, Allen Say
2. The Quilt, Tony Johnston, Tomie dePaola
3. Something From Nothing, Phoebe Gilman

journal entries-

1. How would you feel if you left your grandparents to go to another country?
2. Thanksgiving makes me feel...

art activity-

1. Various Thanksgiving activities

December-

Conflict Resolution

Objective-

Students will be able to apply peacemaking skills in conflict situations.

Week one-

Conflict Situations

activities-

1. Introduce that conflict is a part of our lives. In base groups, brainstorm with whom children have conflicts. Categorize these people.

2. Brainstorm ways to handle conflict situations. Introduce Conflict Resolution skills chart (Appendix I).

literature sources-

1. A Peaceable Kingdom, Alice Provenson

2. The Quarreling Book, Charlotte Zolotow

journal entries-

1. When someone yells at me I...

2. People who make me mad are...

art activity-

1. Create line art to express emotions -angry or peaceful lines.

Week two-

Recognizing your actions

activities-

1. Using chart, introduce the notion of "Stop, Think, and Act." Set up conflicts from literature and have children fill out chart.

2. Introduce the "Angry Thermometer" (Appendix J) so children can reflect on how angry they might feel during various situations. Sing song of angry feelings and how to act.

literature sources-

1. Herbie's Troubles, Chatman

2. Amos and Boris, William Stein

journal entries-

1. Reflect on a time when you were angry. How could you have handled it differently?

2. When someone pushes me around I...(Compare with journal entry: September, week two.)

art activity-

1. Create and laminate personal angry thermometer.

Week three-

The Peace Table

activities-

1. Introduce the concept of a peace table. Set up peace table in classroom using peace table rules (Appendis K).

2. In base groups, write play with various conflict situations and use of the peace table. Perform play for other classes.

literature sources-

1. Let's Be Enemies, Janice Udry

2. That's Mine, Elizabeth Winthrop

journal entries-

1. Because of this life skills unit, I...

2. One thing I learned from this is...

art activities-

1. Create flip books in which conflict is on cover and resolution is on the inside.

Chapter 4

Historical Description of the Intervention

This project was designed as a program to improve socialization skills and conflict resolution skills, while developing better self-esteem. The targeted population consisted of one kindergarten class, one first grade class, and one third grade class all at three different elementary schools in the same district. The art teacher was also involved in this research. Lessons were reinforced when the kindergarten and first grade classes met for art instruction. The certified school nurse participated in this project by discussing self-awareness and self-esteem through her emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene. To appeal to the musical/rhythmical and kinesthetic intelligences, the music teacher taught various songs to promote cooperating and getting along.

The problem of low self-esteem and poor social skills was documented through teacher observation checklists, teacher and student surveys, individual and teacher interviews, and also anecdotal records. Analysis of probable causes revealed that greater exposure to more violence and rudeness in society, changes in family structures, poor role models, and lack of experience in developing social skills contributed to this problem. Review of literature supported that these factors have an effect on children. Teachers have observed children being rude,

thoughtless, and sometimes rejecting other children. The participating teachers met to review what was being done at the respective schools. It was noted that there was a need for additional resources in the life-skills and self-esteem curriculum in our schools. After a review of the literature, lessons were designed to promote a curriculum to benefit the development of positive social interaction skills for this action research project.

Five themes were developed to implement our action research. The five themes initiated were: self-awareness, cooperation, feelings, responsibility, and conflict resolution. The themes were introduced in whole group direct instruction. They were practiced in cooperative groups. The groups met two times a week for half hour sessions. The lessons were taught by weekly topics and adjusted according to grade level. Many of the lessons dealt with literature. The classes were designed to enable the students to transfer the life skills learned in the literature and applied them to actual situations. Teachers observed students exhibiting acts of responsibility, cooperation, caring, courage, friendship, patience, effort, sense of humor, organization, problem solving. The children role-played and learned to use the peace table to settle conflicts. A teacher survey (Appendix B) was administered in September. At this time, behavior checklists (Appendices D & E) were initiated at all three sites. These checklists were devised to focus on social skills. The following are the five themes which were targeted in the classroom lessons.

Self-awareness and Cooperation

Objective -

Students will be able to get to know themselves and classmates in order to become aware of feelings and actions.

We began our unit with various literature. The first grade and third grade classes used two books: Fish is Fish and A Color of My Own, by Leo Lionni. We focused on the main idea of the stories. Both stories stressed the idea that the main characters should accept themselves for being who they are and not trying to be someone else.

Self-awareness was introduced in kindergarten through the mystery box. Students were asked to look inside a box. Hidden inside the box was simply a mirror. When the children peeked, they saw themselves. In doing this the students were made aware of their own special qualities. In the discussion that followed, the children responded with their name and physical characteristics. To introduce self awareness and individuality in kindergarten, a Special Student Program was established where each child had a turn to explore their special qualities . He or she was to bring in a bag filled with favorite items for show and tell. Then he/she was given a star in which a photograph of the child was displayed. On this star, they were to also create pictures of their favorite likes. To emphasize the individuality and uniqueness of each child, the kindergarten children made their hand prints in paint.

The first grade class also participated in self-awareness and cooperation activities. The children filled in an apple tree from questions that described their favorite likes (Appendix L). Samples of these questions are favorite color, game, subject in

school, and what quality they like about themselves. Through doing this, children became aware of their own qualities and the qualities they share with others. These activities introduced the Special Student Program. Each week a student was randomly chosen. He/she brought a bag with favorite items for show and tell and decorated a star with his/her "favorites." A special booklet and chart was made for the child. In the booklet pictures were drawn by each child in the class. The chart was displayed in the room for the week stating special things about the student.

In the first grade art class lesson on self-awareness, students had a discussion about themselves. They focused on their likes and tried to name some things they considered important, or activities they could do well. Then on a tee shirt shaped paper they made pictures or wrote words to make a "Me" shirt. These were decorated with markers and displayed for Open House.

To coordinate with a Native American theme that was being taught in third grade, the children filled out an interest inventory to state their likes and dislikes. To display these thoughts, the children used catalogs to create totem poles or tepees. On these projects, children cut out pictures in the catalogs to describe their likes and dislikes. Once finished, they were asked to write a paragraph that explained why each picture was chosen. These paragraphs were attached to the projects. They were then displayed in the classroom for Open House. Through this project, the children visually were able to focus on similarities and differences possessed by their classmates.

Teachers observed that results were positive following these lessons. Children seemed to be more positive about their

individual uniqueness and the uniqueness of others. The classes seemed to feel a sense of belonging and caring about each other. These lessons also enabled the teachers to get a better feel of the make-up of their classes. It helped set the tone for the future classes in our projects. Children seemed excited about getting to know each other and very excited about sharing their special likes and talents

It was noted that many children had a very difficult time in thinking about questions such as "What makes me happy?". During this month, the children journaled their ideas into notebooks set up to think about themselves. This month, the children journaled on "I am happy when...", "When I grow up...", "When someone pushes me around I...", "I really get angry when...". Due to the personal nature of some of the journals, the teacher thought it best to only have the children quietly reflect on what it is they wrote. However, it was noted that all of the children were very excited to share their writing with the entire class, even if some of the material seemed very personal. For example, for the journal entry entitled "I get angry when..." some children wrote about fighting parents or parents who decided to divorce.

Next we began the ability to recognize our own actions; a student survey was implemented (Appendix C) in which students reflected on their own feelings and ways they react to certain situations. Students at all levels were interviewed and questioned about conflicts. Their responses were tape recorded. At the end of our project we re-interviewed the students and compared their answers to the first set of questions.

It was observed that children were more adept in dealing with their feelings and reacting to certain situations. They listed

more techniques they could use in problem-solving situations. The children were putting into practice what skills they learned during our research project. Thus, showing a positive effect of the project.

The first graders were shown the video "The Letter On Light Blue Stationery," by Joy Berry. At the end of the video, the children had to say one nice thing about their seat partner. Some things they remarked on were: their partner is polite, they are nice, they like to share, they have pretty eyes, and they read nicely.

It was noted the children used listening and verbal skills to express positive qualities of others. Thus, again realizing the uniqueness of themselves and others.

Cooperation

In kindergarten and first grade, the word cooperation was webbed, that is each child stated what cooperation meant to them. Many Bernstain Bear books were read, and the children were put into cooperative groups. The rules and jobs of cooperative groups were taught. To practice this the children were paired with a partner and did a puzzle together (Appendix M). These cooperative puzzles were video taped and displayed at Open House giving parents an idea of what was being stressed in the project.

At this time the first grade teacher also introduced the Word For the Week Concept. From then until the end of the year a polite or life-skills word was displayed in the classroom. During each week the children practiced using the word and also acting accordingly. The first word of the week was "please." In Appendix N, a list of all the words used can be found. The word

of the week was presented to kindergarten students at a later date.

Both teachers observed little acts of kindness happening in the room. Children actually used these polite words without being told. The art teacher noted this happening in art class also. The principals in the schools noted these acts of kindness.

Next the children were to self- reflect on how they have been relating to the concepts taught so far, and how they have been participating in their cooperative groups. Mrs. Potter's questions (Appendix G) were introduced and discussed. Kindergarten students engaged in a cooperative art class to learn about the relationships among colors. Each child received a plastic see through paddle of a particular color. They looked through it to see the effects and when the art teacher said "trade," they had to find someone in the room with a different color, take turns looking through both (red and blue together making violet) and then go on with the traded color. They were instructed to ask "Would you like to trade?" and then do so with no grabbing. They learned that cooperation was necessary because it took two primary colors to create a secondary color.

The third grade class participated in many similar activities. The children were put into base groups. They were told that these would be their cooperative group until at least December. They were very excited about this concept. The first lesson of the groups was to web the word cooperation. It was explained that they would be presenting their information on what their groups believe this word meant. It was also discussed that using sentences, phrases, examples, or pictures was acceptable for this task.

Once this project was completed, the children were again put into their groups and asked to make a list of what they believe good group rules are. The lists were compiled. We found that many groups listed very similar ideas that are good group rules. For example, listening to your partners was listed several times. We compared these with social skills and comprised a list of what we believe good group rules are.

In another third grade classroom activity, IALAC was read and discussed (Appendix F). This acronym stands for "I am loving and capable." In this story a little boy was treated in a way that continuously hurt his self-esteem. The children were very verbal about the way the main character was treated. They were then put into their base groups, given large pieces of poster paper, and asked to create posters of ways that negative situations in the story could have been handled in a positive way. There were several situations to choose from, so this was the children's first attempt at coming to a consensus. At first, this activity was very difficult, and feelings were being hurt. Therefore, Mrs. Potter's Questions were introduced (Appendix G), and the children had the opportunity to state their opinions on their own. Once finished, the children were very impressed with the work that their group produced.

Responsibility

Objective -

Students will be able to recognize that they are accountable for actions and words.

The introductory activity was to web the word responsibility. The kindergarten teacher read There's Lots That I Can Do by Kathleen Harte and All By Myself by Mercer Mayer. These stories

were discussed. The children expressed how proud they felt when they could do things by themselves and help others.

The children and the teacher brainstormed ways that they can help at school (starting our "helping hands" job chart) and help at home. A Venn diagram was created. Each child made a paper doll of himself or herself. Two circles of dolls were created. The dolls represented each child in the class. One circle represented how children help at home, and the other circle was how children help at school. The children's ideas were placed in the appropriate circles.

Also Six Crows by Leo Lionni was read to help reiterate the importance of using your words. In fact, the owl in the story says, "Words can do magic..." After this story, the kindergarten teacher introduced the Magic Words: please, thank you, etc. One word was concentrated on weekly. The children even played "Mother May I ?" in gym class. In art class, the children continued discussing the Six Crows story and used colored paper, glue, and crayons to make crows and scarecrows.

In first grade, the book A Chair For My Mother by Vera Williams was read. The children discussed how the characters were responsible and caring in the story. They drew pictures showing these traits and displayed them around the web of responsibility. This month the first grade teacher also began "The Wall of Life Skills Words"(Appendix N). The children painted ten shoe boxes in art class. On each box was printed a life skills word. These are the words used in first grade: responsibility, cooperation, caring, courage, friendship, patience, effort, sense of humor, organization, and problem-solving. During the course of the project, each time the first grade teacher "caught" the child

acting out one of the life-skills, their name was put in the appropriate box.

Each of these words were discussed and webbed during the project.

The teacher observed many positives from this part of the project. Students were using the life-skills in their actions. They were also incorporating the life-skills words in their conversation. They were being caring by stating when fellow students acted in a positive way. The children would then ask the teacher to put their classmate's names in the appropriate like skills boxes.

The principal noticed the change and what was happening in the first grade class. He complimented the teacher on the great behavior and attitude of the first grade class.

The art teacher started noticing the positive behavior. In art class the children were using the life-skills words and practicing them in actions. All she had to say was one of the key words, for instance, responsibility, and the class responded quickly and appropriately.

To reinforce the theme of responsibility in art class, kindergarten and first grade students enjoyed making pictures of the various animals in <u>The Little Red Hen</u> story. Each table chose one of the story's animals for the main subject of their pictures.

The third grade class began the concept of responsibility in the same way that they began cooperation. The class was asked to web this word in their cooperative group. Before the children did this presentation, they were introduced to the strategy of "jigsawing" in which they were paired with another group and shared their ideas. Once finished, they grouped again with two more groups to see if any new ideas were introduced.

The class was now ready to begin thinking about individual jobs in their cooperative groups. Various jobs were introduced, such as timekeeper, materials manager, presenter, observer and recorder. We fish bowled these roles and discussed how each job is important. It was noted that children were very excited about some jobs, and not about others. As time went on, children became very upset when they were assigned a job that they did not want. The teacher found the need to go back to introducing each job and why each was important. However, this still did not change some children's minds, and they did the jobs grudgingly.

At this time, the three participating classes attended a field trip to the J.F.K. Health Center in Barrington. There the kindergarten and the first grade viewed and heard the exhibit "Special Me", and the third grade participated in "Accepting Myself and Others". The children participated in a class and understood the concepts of self-awareness from previous lessons of our action research project.

Feelings

Objective-

Students will be able to identify their feelings and be able to express them appropriately.

The children were asked to begin thinking about their feelings and actions. In kindergarten, the children discussed what they knew about feelings. The two feelings that dominated the discussion were happy and sad. While exploring what makes the students happy, they unanimously voted that the sun represented a happy symbol to them. All students enjoyed working on the "class book" display creating a sun with each child creating their own ray of sunshine on what makes them happy. When completed, this

acted as a happy reminder for the students upon which to reflect. Class books were done as other feelings were discussed and the children wrote in their journals. Several wordless books were used to initiate discussions and to encourage kindergarten students to use their words to express their feelings to each other, especially if someone bumped into them, etc. The video, "Use Your Words", was also shown to help the children express their feelings.

During this month, the kindergarten students were working cooperatively with the first grade students of Site A on a reenactment of the "First Thanksgiving". While working on the play, the word Thanksgiving and thankful were defined and discussed. The children reflected on who or what they felt most thankful for, as the teacher integrated core curriculum and this research project. The students traced the appropriate Indian symbols representing men/women, and after much reflection, using Kid's Works 2 , they wrote their thankful word. Then they glued their word onto their Indian person. The children created the bulletin board sheets used to create a teepee, thus creating the bulletin board display entitled "A Thankful Teepee".

The book, Feeling Sad by Joy Berry was read. The class shared what made them feel sad. Then they did the paper plate activity. On one side of the plate they wrote "I feel sad when" and on the other side they drew what made them feel sad. They then shared these things with the class.

The first grade teacher displayed the "feeling chart" (Appendix H). The class brought in magazine pictures showing different feelings. Jack and the Beanstalk was used to show

bravery. The children also role-played about Columbus, the astronauts, and the Pilgrims to show courage.

Next, Alexander and the Horrible, Terrible, No Good Very Bad Day. by Judith Viorst was read. The class illustrated how they felt for Alex. They chose a word from the feeling chart.

It was noted that the children were better able to put their feelings into words. They were able to state specifically why they were feeling a certain way. They were more adept at recognizing feelings of others after these lessons. The first graders listened better to others' stories and tried to make them feel better if they were upset or unhappy. More apologies were heard by the teacher when they hurt others' feelings.

In art class, we continued working on the theme, feelings. The students looked at handouts of faces and tried to name the feelings expressed. They also tried to show emotions that were suggested by the teacher by "making faces". We discussed how eyes, eyebrows, and mouths can tell how people feel even if no words are spoken. On a large paper divided in half, "happy" was written on one side and "sad" was written on the other side. A simple picture was made for each.

Third grade was very ready for the idea of feelings, since this concept is vital to IGAP. In the base groups, children were asked to brainstorm as many feeling words as they could in a fifteen minute time frame. Once the groups were brought together as a whole group, the lists were compiled. The class was extremely excited to find that the class was able to come up with a 62 word total. We chose certain words from the list, and the children were asked to close their eyes and think of a time that they felt either guilty, lonely, scared, or quiet. It was also

at this time of the project that we read a book called Feelings, by Phoebe and Tris Dunn. With this book, children looked at pictures of small children, and were asked to guess the feelings that each child had. It was also discussed that different people can have different feelings in certain situations. Joy Berry's books which deal with understanding your feelings were also included. The teacher noted that the children were very eager and willing to discuss their personal feelings with the class.

Children in the third grade class were also given a group assignment that went along with feelings. The previously compiled list of feelings were distributed to each group. The children had to categorize the words and decide which words would be used to describe positive feelings and negative feelings. It was noted that the groups found some words that they felt could go into both categories and asked if they were allowed to do this. This was acceptable if the group could come up with situations for each side.

To correspond with these lessons, the social worker came into the classroom. She showed the children many large pictures and asked them to describe feelings that they thought the characters were feeling at the time. Some pictures were realistic and others were cartoons. Once this was finished, the children were asked to do a two minute writing entitled how I am feeling right now.

Conflict Resolution

Objective -

Students will be able to apply peacemaking skills in conflict situations.

As simple conflicts arose in the kindergarten classroom,

children were asked to apologize. At the kindergarten level, children accidentally bump into one another all the time. Sometimes, saying sorry wasn't enough depending on the incident, so the kindergarten teacher and students discussed strategies. It was decided that if an apology wasn't satisfactory with the injured party, then the perpetrator would also make a "Sorry Picture". This picture consisted of a hand drawn picture of what should have happened, instead of what did. The "Sorry Picture" was then given to the offended party followed by a hand shake; thus, putting closure to the problem.

The kindergarten teacher frequently asked the children what they could do to solve the problem. The children brainstormed problem solving and practiced what they had discussed. Situations were also role played. The children suggested taking turns and sharing. The kindergarten teacher taught the children that it might be helpful to flip a coin sometimes to settle disputes. All of these activities were demonstrated with the children taking on different roles. After the end of the project, the kindergarten teacher noticed the students using coin flipping as the they were negotiating playing at certain popular play centers.

The first graders viewed the video "Ten Things To Do Instead of Hitting". They discussed the video and brought a list home (Appendix O) and hung a list in the classroom of the ten things to do instead of hitting. The teacher then read <u>The Hating Book</u>. They discussed how different situations in the book upset them. Next they were given the Angry Thermometer (Appendix T) and asked to color in the thermometer to show how angry certain situations made them feel. It was noted they were really bothered by certain situations and if not taken care of in due time, their

dispositions were upset and it interfered with their school day. The children really wanted to find ways to handle and settle their problems. They were searching for alternatives to hitting and fighting. They just didn't have the tools yet. This was a good lead into the "peace table" lessons that ended the project. The children were observed to be in need of knowing the appropriate measures to follow to settle a conflict.

At this point, the peace table was introduced in the first grade class. The rules were hung up in the room (Appendix K) The class then role played conflicts at the peace table. They stated what was bothering them, why it bothered them, brain stormed what could be done about it, then decided on the actions to use to solve it that would not injure anyone's feelings, and then did it. The teacher was a mediator only if she was needed. If not, they tried to settle it on their own.

The teacher observed many positive effects of the Peace Table. Children were willing to come to the Peace Table and discuss their problem. They were listening to what bothered others and showed more patience and understanding when dealing with other's feelings of the problem. They tried to come up with solutions that were a peaceable settlement to their problems.

To illustrate the peaceful solution to a conflict students in kindergarten and first grade made flip books in art class. A conflict was pictured on the cover and their representation of the solution inside.

Throughout the course of the year in third grade, the children read many stories as part of their normal curriculum. Some of these stories were used as examples to discuss various conflicts that the characters had with each other. The class

discussed ways that the characters attempted to solve the problems, and how they finally came to a solution. From here, we discussed how conflicts are part of our every day life. We talked about who we have conflicts with and what are some good ways to solve these problems. The conflict resolution skills chart was introduced to the children (Appendix P). Each of the nine rules were discussed. Children were required to give their ideas on what each rule meant to them. They as a whole group were also asked come up with times that they felt they acted in this positive way.

The children had previously been introduced to the right angle graphic organizer (Appendix P). Each group was given one of the first six conflict resolution skills. They were asked to create a poster using the graphic organizer to express the meaning of the skill. The children were then asked to present their work.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The following table 3 is an observation checklist that records the number of incidents for each category. NA indicates that numerical figures were not appropriate for a particular grade, time, or topic. This action research was based on naturalistic observations, and does not require a great deal of numerical data.

The figures shown in this table indicate a decrease in negative behaviors. The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on all targeted behaviors. These figures support the teachers' observations of improvement throughout the project.

Table 3: Classroom Behavior Checklist (Appendix D)

*Physical Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
1	NA	10	1	NA	8		1	NA	7	0	NA	4

*Verbal Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
0	NA	12	3	NA	7		0	NA	9	0	NA	2

*Negative Social Interactions:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
39	NA	28	6	NA	24		1	NA	17	1	NA	9

Cooperative Group Behavior Checklist (Appendix E)

*Physical Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	45	NA	NA	15	6		NA	9	1	NA	6	1

*Verbal Aggression:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	15	NA	NA	26	8		NA	12	5	NA	6	3

*Does Not Contribute:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	1	NA	NA	7	9		NA	5	8	NA	4	5

*Unprepared:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	2	NA	NA	7	4		NA	6	2	NA	4	0

*Physically Leaves Group:

	Sept.			Oct.			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	2	NA	NA	7	8		NA	5	3	NA	3	2

*Off Task:

	Sept.			Oct			Nov.			Dec.		
Sites:												
A	B	C	A	B	C		A	B	C	A	B	C
NA	2	NA	NA	4	10		NA	4	10	NA	3	4

An unplanned opportunity to assess the effects of the Action Research interventions occurred at site C. At this site there is another first grade class that was not involved in this project. The size and make-up of that class is similar to the targeted first grade class in the same building. The art teacher noted on several occasions the differences in behavior, manners, and the ability to get along between the two classes. The targeted class worked better in groups and more often were able to handle possible conflicts. The targeted class responded quickly to reminders when some of their key words (cooperation, responsibility, etc.) were mentioned. They often used life skills vocabulary and were proud to put what they had learned into action. For instance, one group raised their hands after materials were distributed to show the teacher how they had "organized" everything, using one of the life skill's words. The targeted first grade class was "easier" to teach.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the student post-implementation survey showed students using a wider variety of means to deal with and solve conflict. They had a more positive self-image and had more insight into the feelings of others. They stopped and reflected on how their actions do affect others. They didn't seem to always want to be the winner. They wanted the others to feel good too.

The children enjoyed working in their cooperative groups. They knew better what was expected of them and specifically, what their cooperative group jobs required. They seemed to accomplish their tasks in a more organized manner with greater self-assurance.

The children were able to use their conflict resolution

skills and felt good about their decisions. They told their teachers when they thought it was necessary to go to the peace table. They seemed sincere in their decisions on what actions they should take to handle to problems. When they felt they needed a mediator, they were comfortable calling on the teacher. We felt the children had a better comprehension and recognition of conflict, and were able to respond with appropriate actions and solutions.

A decrease in verbal and physical aggression showed the children implemented what was taught during our action research project. The children began to incorporate into their lives the "Ten things to do instead of hitting."

These results also showed a maturity level developing in the classes. They were no longer the "young" children we had in September. They were four months older and using conflict resolution skills.

At the end of our project, we came to the realization that just as teachers must teach academics, so must they teach life-skills and conflict-resolution skills. Our classes were a better place to be after these lessons. We recommended that a life skills unit be incorporated into the curriculum in our schools. At one of the sites, the principal was so impressed with the behavior of the class, he asked the teacher her "secret" to success. He would like to see this project developed further at the district's schools.

The children were receptive and enjoyed doing the planned activities and lessons. The project increased the children's knowledge of their feelings, their ways of relating and dealing with others, and their ways to solve conflicts peaceably.

Teachers must provide children with an atmosphere of caring and understanding. If children see the entire school, including the teachers, using positive life-skills and conflict resolution skills, they will become more aware of positive actions and positive feelings. In addition, the bilingual children were able to benefit from these lessons. However, we feel that this is an area that needs to be further developed through picures, wordless literature, and videos.

This project has impacted our teaching significantly. Through our years of teaching and gained expertise, each teacher has experienced children who have not had the opportunity to think about themselves as an individual, whose feelings are important. We have also had children who may be only children, or who have never had to work with other children in groups. Of course, every teacher experiences the child who is argumentative with his peers, or the child who is simply teasing. These children are always a source of some frustration.

This life skills unit has enabled us to have a solid curriculum to teach these skills and strategies to the children. Although our main focus at the beginning of the project was "Conflict Resolution", we soon realized that the building blocks, self-awareness, cooperation, responsibility, and feelings was extremely important. The children were able to relate to these lessons. The shy child benefitted by learning his thoughts, fears, and feelings were very important, and he learned skills on how to stick up for his own rights.

This project created a strong atmosphere of community in our rooms. Our real concerns and feelings were exposed. Because of this, we each will utilize this same format of the project in our

classrooms. It has effected our teaching because we now have solid lesson plans in tact. It was a strong way to begin the year to get to know the children, and it was a solid part of curriculm to be involved in during the middle of the year, when classroom tensions can run high.

Although the project was time consuming, we feel that it will be easier to implement due to the fact that detailed records do not need to be kept. We found that many of the lessons were taught during teachable moments, and the teachers needed to be flexible with lessons.

We feel that this project should not be a four month project. It should be carried out throughout the year. Moreover, it should be implemented in each grade level because each child experiences new behavioral and social issues with each year of maturity. As the years progress, each teacher will find it easier to teach these strategies because the children will already have a knowledge base from their primary years.

We recommend teachers utilize the following objectives when setting up their classroom for the upcoming year:

1. To enable students to get to know themselves and classmates in order to become aware of their own feelings and actions, and those of others.
2. To enable students to recognize that they are accountable for their actions and words.
3. To enable students to identify their feelings and express them appropriately.
4. To enable students to apply peace-making skills in conflict situations.

We further recommend that each school implements the life

skills unit and conflict resolution training as a part of their curriculum. Through our research, we believe that there is a dire need for this. The state of Illinois passed legislature in 1993 to require school districts to teach children nonviolent methods of resolving conflicts, but few schools have included this in their curriculum at this time. There is also ample documentation to indicate that this will enable the students to become more peaceable citizens.

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Appendices

(Appendix A)
Child Interview

1. What would you do if you were first in line and another child pushed you out of line to take your place?
2. What would you do if you are watching your favorite TV show and your older brother or sister changes the channel?
3. What would you do if you wanted to play with someone at recess and that person won't let you play with him?
4. What would you do if you are playing with a ball and someone takes your ball away?
5. What would you do if you are outside on the playground and another child starts teasing you and calling you names?

Each child will be asked three to four of the above questions and they will be tape recorded. Then they will be asked the same questions at the end of our research project and the responses will be compared.

Appendix B
Teacher Survey

1. Do your students like working in groups?

1	2	3	4	5
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

2. Do your students like working alone?

1	2	3	4	5
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

3. Do your students fight or use aggression in handling problems?

1	2	3	4	5
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

4. Do your students listen to one another?

1	2	3	4	5
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

5. Do you have parents that are supportive to your class policies?

1	2	3	4	5
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

6. On a scale of 1 - 5 rate your classroom atmosphere. (One is highest, 5 lowest)

1	2	3	4	5

7. Do the majority of your students participate in class discussions?

1	2	3	4	5
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

8. Are your students supportive of each other?

1	2	3	4	5
always	often	sometimes	rarely	never

(Appendix C)
Student Survey

1. Do you like school?	yes	no
2. Do you have friends?	yes	no
3. Do you like to be alone?	yes	no
4. Do you like to work in groups?	yes	no
5. Do you fight at school?	yes	no
6. Do you hit your classmates?	yes	no
7. Is the teacher nice to you?	yes	no
8. Do you share at school?	yes	no
9. Are you mean to children?	yes	no
10. Do you help others?	yes	no

(Appendix D)

Classroom Behavior Check List (whole group)

CLASS ROLL	RULE 1	RULE 2	RULE 3

(Appendix E)

Cooperative Group Behavior Check List

			APPENDIX C			
CLASS ROLL	RULE 1	RULE 2	RULE 3	RULE 4	RULE 5	RULE 6

(Appendix F)
IALAC

_____, age_____ woke up one school morning looking at his pajama top. _____ saw a giant, neon sign. It flashed on and off, IALAC. _____ knew at once this meant "I am loving and capable. _____ dressed and ran quickly to the kitchen. _____ was very excited. Before _____ could speak, _____ sister said, "You pea-brain, (rip) what did you do with my new jacket?" "Nothing,"_____ said. "Man," whined his sister, " _____ is a jerk." (rip) " ____ ," said his unhappy mother. "You oughta know better. Why can't you use your brain (rip) once in a while. Your big brother would never do anything so stupid." (rip) "But Mom," _____ said, "I..." "Don't sass me back," said _____ mother. "You are such a smart mouth." (rip) _____ saw _____ sister smirking. "Smart mouth, smart mouth." (rip, double rip)

By the time _____ left for the school bus, one-half of IALAC was ripped. On the school bus, George Burns said _____ was an idiot(rip), cry baby and jerk (rip). _____sister laughed each time. (triple rip)

In the first class period, Mrs. Smartzolla asked to put _____ homework problem on the board. _____ forgot a step in the math formula. "_____," she moaned, " how slow can you be? I've told you a thousand times." (rip)

In language arts, Mr. Thomas barked at _____ for getting the lowest score on the vocabulary quiz. (rip) He read how _____ had misspelled _____ to the whole class and said sarcastically, "I guess no one could ever accuse you of a gorgative brain." (rip) Everyone laughed. (rip)

By the end of the day, _____ went home with a very small

IALAC sign. _____ was very upset.

The next day, _____ woke to find IALAC on _____ pajamas, but very small. _____ hoped that today would be better. _____ wanted to keep his IALAC so much.

(Appendix G)
Mrs. Potter's Questions

1. What were you expected to do?
2. What did you do well?
3. What help did you need from me?
4. If you were to do this over again, what would you do differently?

(Appendix H)

These Are My Feelings

excited	important	funny
sad	concerned	hungry
lonely	tired	gentle
sorry	grief	confident
frightened	left out	furious
hurt	impatient	embarrassed
silly	content	surprised
confused	caring	ashamed
quiet	cool	anxious
jealous	strong	worried
angry	loud	frustrated
disappointed	sassy	hopeless
nervous	upset	loving
proud	bored	humiliated
happy	unimportant	alone
loved	weak	suspicious
energetic	joyful	annoyed

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(Appendix I)

Conflict Resolution Skills

Children will learn to:

1. say clearly what they want
2. listen carefully to what the other person is saying
3. let others know how they feel
4. understand how the other person feels
5. overcome shyness and speak up for their rights
6. respect the rights of others
7. control impulses and irrational behavior
8. develop strategies for taking turns, sharing compromising
9. take responsibility for their behavior

(Appendix J)

Name _____

Anger Thermometer

Take your "anger" temperature.

When someone calls you a name, how angry do you get? (Fill in the bulb up to the line that describes your anger.)

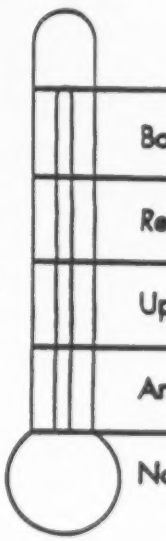
What do you do?

_____

_____

_____

When someone pushes you, how angry do you get? (Fill in the bulb up to the line that describes your anger.)



What do you do?

_____

_____

_____

What other things make you angry? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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★ REMEMBER: When you become angry—whether you're boiling mad or just annoyed—**Stop** and **Think** before you **Act**. You have the power to manage your own anger so that you don't hurt others—and you don't hurt yourself.

(Appendix K)
Peace Table Rules

1. Keep both hands on the Peace Table while you are talking and listening.
2. Tell the truth.
3. Listen without interrupting.
4. No name-calling or blaming.
5. List ideas to solve the problem.
6. Choose the best solution.

Let's Be Friends!

Favorite School Subject

Favorite Color

I like to

My Pets

My Birthday

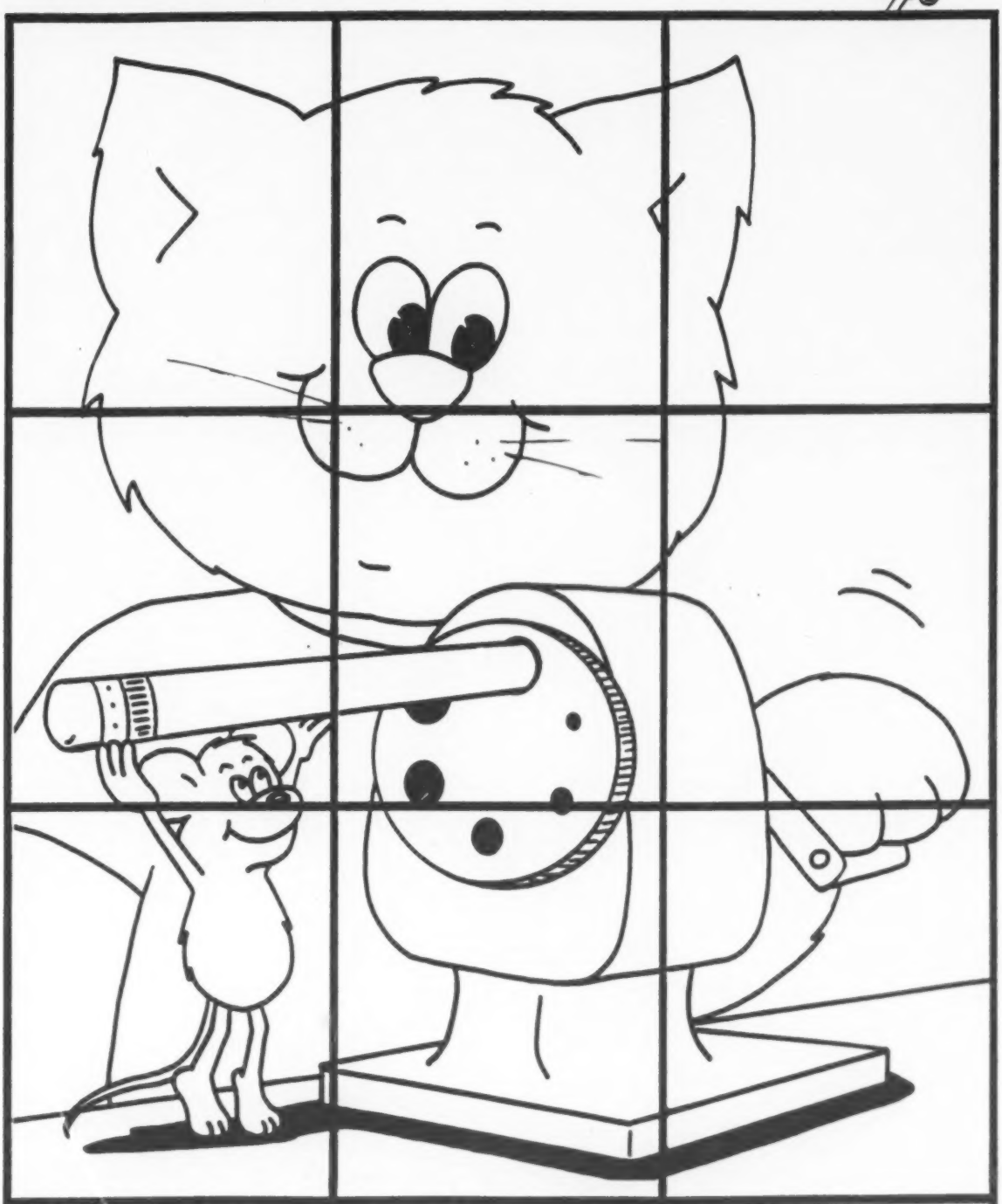
Favorite Food

Name

(Appendix M)

Cooperation, Visual discrimination

Partner Puzzle



Cooperation gets the job done.

Life-Skills Words
(Appendix N)

1. Caring
2. Courage
3. Effort
4. Excuse me
5. Friendship
6. I'm Sorry
7. May I
8. No, thank you
9. Organization
10. Pardon Me
11. Patience
12. Perseverance
13. Please
14. Problem solving
15. Responsibility
16. Sense of humor
17. Thank you
18. You're welcome

"10"

- talk about angry feelings
- squish clay or some other appropriate substitute
- cool off by counting to ten, say the alphabet, etc.
- draw a picture
- use up angry energy by working hard (doing housework)
- pound a pillow
- write about angry feelings
- get angry energy out by blowing up balloons
- do something active such as running and jumping
- dream about some favorite things to do

(Appendix P)

NAME _____ CLASS _____

THE RIGHT ANGLE